

# Modernizing SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions Better Afford Healthy Food

SNAP forms a critical foundation for the health and well-being of low-income families and individuals, lifting millions above the poverty line and improving food security. Despite the program's successes, SNAP benefits are based on an outdated measure of the cost of food and as a result fall short of what many participants need to purchase and prepare a healthy diet, studies show. The bipartisan 2018 farm bill directed the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to reevaluate the Thrifty Food Plan, which is used to set SNAP benefit levels, to better reflect the modern cost of a healthy diet by 2022.

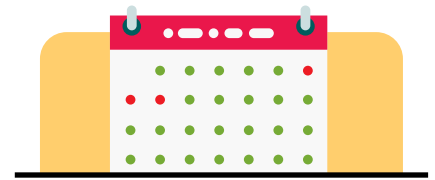
## Raising benefits would:



Improve many participants' food security, meaning they have more reliable access to enough food for an active, healthy life.



Help participants afford a healthy diet and free up room in their limited budgets to meet other essential needs.



Increase many participants' food spending and help avoid a drop in food intake throughout the month.

## It's time to modernize SNAP benefits to better reflect the cost of a healthy diet.

SNAP benefits are based on the USDA's outdated Thrifty Food Plan. The cost of the Thrifty Food Plan is supposed to represent the amount of money needed to purchase a nutritious diet assuming people take significant steps to stretch their food dollars, but it has been adjusted only for inflation since the 1970s, resulting in SNAP benefits that fall short of families' needs.

## The Thrifty Food Plan:



Doesn't reflect the foods most people consume



Assumes consumers have unlimited time to cook, with limited use of time-saving healthy food, such as pre-sliced frozen vegetables



Doesn't meet all federal nutritional recommendations



Doesn't account for a range of dietary needs, such as lactose intolerance or diabetes

## Many participants struggle once they run out of SNAP and other income to buy food. Studies show that later in the month, SNAP participants:

- Spend less on food
- Consume fewer calories
- Are likelier to be food insecure

- Visit food pantries more frequently
- May be likelier to visit emergency rooms or be admitted to a hospital due to low blood sugar

- Have lower scores on basic achievement and other tests and more disciplinary problems in school